

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Initially, Applicant would like to express appreciation to the Examiner for the detailed Official Action provided, for the acknowledgment of Applicant's Information Disclosure Statements by return of the Form PTO-1449s, and for acknowledging the acceptability of the Drawings.

Upon entry of the above amendments, claims 1-4 will have been amended, and claims 5-12 will have been added. Claims 1-12 are currently pending. Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the rejections, and allowance of all the claims pending in the present application.

In the Official Action, the Examiner rejected claims 3 and 4 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by ISAKA et al. (JP 09001574); and

the Examiner rejected claims 1 and 2 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over WATAYA (JP 06270938) in view of ISAKA.

Without acquiescing to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections, Applicant submits that claims 1 and 3 have been amended solely in order to expedite prosecution of the present invention.

In particular, claim 1 sets forth a method for making pallets including, *inter alia*, preparing unwoven fabric of randomly tangled plant fibers; impregnating the unwoven fabric with resin to provide a sheet of base material; sandwiching and pressurizing the sheet of base material between upper and lower metal molds having a plurality of hot-air vents, providing the plurality of hot-air vents extending through the upper and lower molds such that the plurality of hot-air vents are spaced at regular interval throughout

substantially an entire confronting surface of the upper and lower molds; and heating the sheet of base material sandwiched by hot air blowing from one to the other metal mold via the hot-air vents to shape the sheet of base material into a pallet with recesses formed on its surface by the hot-air vents.

Claim 3 sets forth an apparatus for making pallets including, inter alia, upper and lower metal molds confronting each other to define confronting areas; a plurality of hot-air vents extending through the upper and lower molds, the plurality of hot-air vents are spaced at regular interval throughout substantially the entire confronting areas; and a hot-air generator having a hot-air outlet and a hot-air inlet to which the hot-air vents of the upper and lower metal molds are connected respectively, thereby permitting hot air to circulate and pass through between the upper and lower metal molds via the hot-air vents to provide a pallet with recesses formed on its surface by the hot-air vents.

In setting forth each of the rejections, both relying on ISAKA as a basis, the Examiner asserts, inter alia, that ISAKA discloses the presently claimed hot air vents (*see* paragraph 2 on page 2 of the Official Action).

However, contrary to the Examiner's assertions, Applicant submits that the device of ISAKA is very different from the presently claimed invention.

More specifically, Applicant submits that ISAKA merely discloses providing hot air passing holes 23 at areas corresponding to thick molding parts (see Figure 2 of ISAKA).

Thus, Applicant submits that ISAKA does not disclose at least the presently claimed plurality of hot-air vents extending through the upper and lower molds, the

plurality of hot-air vents are spaced at regular intervals throughout substantially the entire confronting surface, as recited in claim 1.

Nor does ISAKA disclose at least the presently claimed plurality of hot-air vents extending through the upper and lower molds, the plurality of hot-air vents being spaced at regular intervals throughout substantially the entire confronting areas, as recited in claim 3.

Further, Applicant submits that the present invention has at least an advantage over the applied prior art in that the presently claimed recesses, formed on the surface of the pallet by the hot-air vents, are capable of preventing, e.g., goods provided on the pallet from slipping (see, page 4, lines 13 of the present Specification).

In this regard, Applicant submits that none of the applied prior art discloses the aforementioned formation of the presently claimed recesses or contemplate the advantages associated therewith.

Further, Applicant submits that new dependent claims 7 and 8 recite, inter alia, the upper and lower molds with corresponding through-holes in communication with the plurality of hot air vents, the corresponding through-holes having a diameter of approximately 1.0 cm.

In this regard, Applicant submits that ISAKA discloses the diameter of the through-hole being about 5mm (see, paragraph 5 of the English language Machine Translation corresponding to ISAKA).

Thus, Applicant submits that ISAKA does not disclose the presently claimed through-holes having a diameter of approximately 1.0 cm., as generally recited in claim 1; Nor does ISAKA contemplate the advantages associated therewith.

Applicant also submits that newly-added dependent claims 5-12 recite additional features of the presently claimed invention, and are fully supported by the present Application (see, page 3, lines 29-34 and page 5, lines 12-15, of the present Specification).

Additionally, Applicant submits that WATAYA does not disclose anything which can reasonably be considered to supply the deficiencies of ISAKA for reasons discussed supra.

Accordingly, Applicant submits that the rejections of claims 1-4 under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102 and 103 are improper and should be withdrawn, and that claims 5-12 are patentable over the applied prior art.

In view of the amendments and arguments herein, Applicant submits that independent claims 1 and 3 are in condition for allowance. With regard to dependent claims 2 and 5-12, Applicant asserts that these claims are allowable on their own merit, as well as because their respective dependencies from independent claims 1 and 3 which Applicant has shown to be allowable.

Thus, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the references cited by the Examiner, either alone or in combination, and an indication to such effect is respectfully requested, in due course.

SUMMARY

Applicant submits that the present application is in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests an indication to that effect. Applicant has argued the allowability of the claims and pointed out deficiencies of the applied references. Accordingly, reconsideration of the outstanding Official Action and allowance of the present application and all the claims therein are respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate.

Applicant notes that this amendment is being made to advance prosecution of the application to allowance and should not be considered as surrendering equivalents of the territory between the claims prior to the present amendment and the amended claims. Further, no acquiescence as to the propriety of the Examiner's rejections is made by the present amendment. All other amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Additionally, this is an express request and authorization to charge any required fees which may be required by the submission of this Response and the accompanying terminal disclaimer in the present application to Deposit Account No. 19-0089.

Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Hiromi WATAYA


Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

October 24, 2008
GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1941 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191

Enoch E. Peavey
Reg. No. 57,686